

17th May 1919.

REPORT OF THOS. E. REA

relative to Dead Horse and Saddle found at GORGE CREEK

I respectfully report that I left Station on the 5th April taking three police camels and two natives, I proceeded to Mt. Augusta and on making inquiries there I found that there was an old native named Jimmy who informed me that he had directed a man named McLennan, but known better to the natives as Pingandy (through being in the district for an number of years and always trying to get to the head of Pingandy Creek in the Ashburton Ranges). I took this old native with me and arrived at a place called Walgertharra, which is a gap through the ranges on to the Ashburton Falls some 80 miles from Augustus. In this gap I found a kangaroo soak at which it took some hours to water the camels and then went on early next morning, and after travelling some 20 miles over rough country came to where the old native last saw the missing man. I found traces there of him dolling stone - this was in or about September 1917.

Again going on in a North East direction and after doing about 15 miles I found traces of where he had been trying some stone. I camped there as Camel 189 was about done. Next morning I left this camel and one of the boys there as the camel was unable to travel - its feet bleeding too much through the rough country - and went on in the direction of where the old native had seen fires about the latter end of November 1917 - the other camel then gave out on the stones. I left them and walked on for two days taking only water with me but could not reach the range where the fires were seen. I had to return and make back for water for ourselves and camels and I travelled all day and night and arrived back late the following night to the water in gap. I very nearly lost the two young camels, their feet giving out on the stones. They were then out four days without water.

I then made to the furthest out cattle camp on Mt. Augustus and tried to get through to the Ashburton but I found that all waters had dried up and there has been no rain since October 1917.



When I crossed the Ranges over the Ashburton Falls some 120 miles from Mt. Augustus I struck the cattle zone on the Ashburton and followed the creek which I think is Gorge Creek towards the Ashburton River and came in sight of Mt. Bashama. I found all water dried up and all stock dead and all game lying with the dead cattle and horses in the big pools which I was informed had never been known to dry before. I then had to turn back as I would have perished with the two young camels. I returned to Mt. Augustus.

On making inquiries I find that no one has ever been further than the Gap at Walgertharra except this old native who at one time in a wet season with other natives had gone to the head of Pingandy Creek.

One old Stockman who knew missing man informed me that McLennan had in the early days come up Pingandy Creek and found gold and he had been trying for years to get back again up the Creek to the Ashburton River but could not do so, which now explains why he had tried to get through from the Goalee River.

The ranges run North and South and are covered with big quartz blows and the country for miles each side is covered with big floaters from them, which cut the camels feet the first half day on them.

I feel sure that he will be near where the fires were seen in 1917, and that his horse got away from him and went over the Falls on to the Ashburton, as I consider it impossible for him to take his sulky over the Falls unless he struck a gap near Pingandy Creek.

The rain which fell in October 1917 would be about 80 points. He must have worked on until it dried up on him and he perished. Fires were seen for two nights at the head of Pingandy Ranges.

I would have liked very much to get through to Pingandy Ranges as other bushmen in that part say no body has got through yet and it is not known what sort of country is there, and I might have been within a few yards of the missing man's sulky when I had to turn back. If I had gone on the two camels would have perished and we finished our water at about 9 a. m. and were without until 10 p. m. that night.

C.O. 2266/18

PERTH 16th April 1920,

Sir,

With reference to your letter of the 6th January last, addressed to the Officer in Charge of Police at Roebourne relative to the whereabouts of your father, I have to state that no trace of him has been ascertained for some considerable time.

The last heard of him was near the end of 1917 when he left the Hammersley Range and expressed his intention of proceeding to the Ashburton.

In March 1918, advice was received from Onslow that a dead horse with saddle on had been found in Gorge Creek, 250 miles distant from that town. It is generally believed that this dead animal belonged to Donald McLennan, prospector, of about 70 years of age, who it was stated used to travel between Phillips Station at Mt. Augusta and Smith's Station on the Hammersley Range referred to in the foregoing.

The Constable in charge of the Gascoyne Junction Station, who has since severed his connection with the Department, made an attempt in April last year to reach the country where fires, which it was considered by the natives were lit by the missing man, were seen, but was forced to abandon the trip on account of the camels knocking up through the rough country traversed. For your information I am attaching an extract from his report.

Owing to the drought in this particular part of the country it has not been possible to arrange for further efforts to be made to clear up the fate of the missing man, and you will realise the difficulty of doing so when it is mentioned that the locality is some 250 miles from the nearest outpost and that the country to be traversed is extremely broken, whilst the waterless condition of same renders the sending of an expedition a very hazardous venture.

Yours faithfully

Commissioner of Police.

